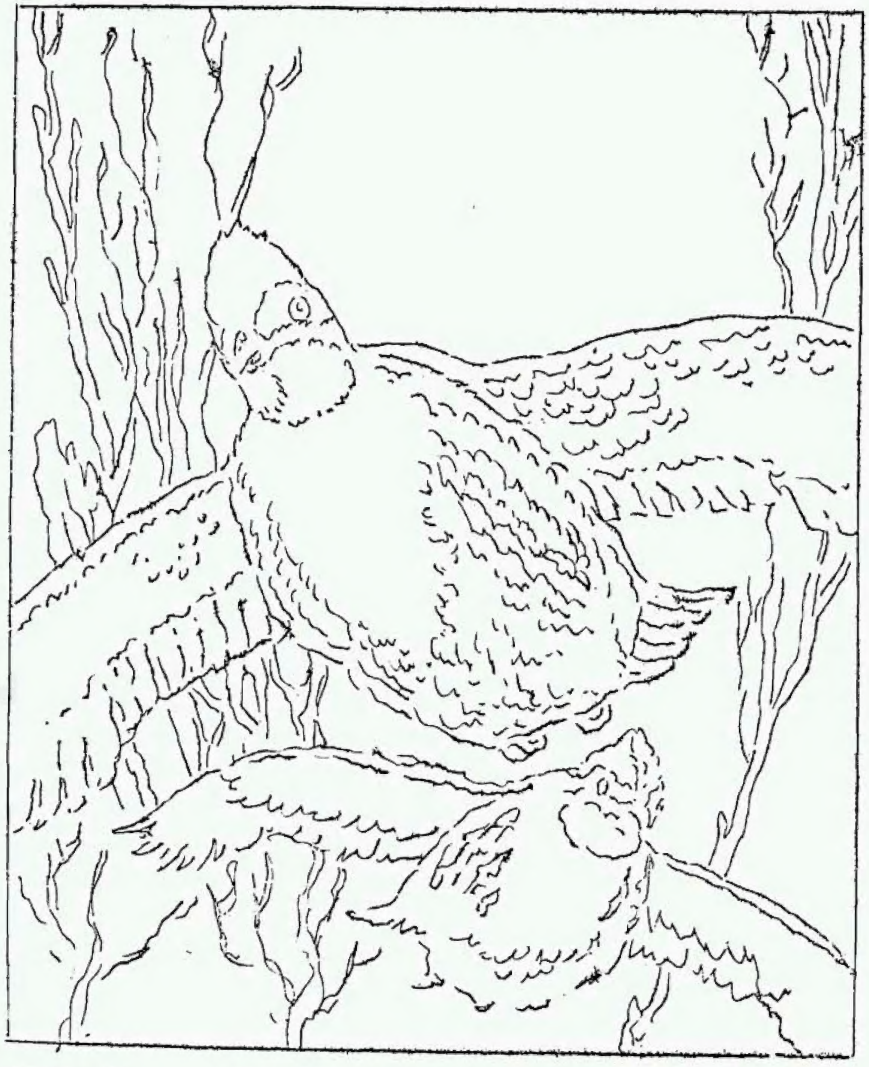
THE MIGRANT



VOL. I SEPTEMBER 1930 NO 2

VALUE OF BIRD STUDY

By R. A. Wilson

Among the activities of life there is nothing more fascinating, more satisfying or more enduring than the observation and study of the birds. The love of birds is a common heritage, and while some of us love them actively, and others passively or subconsciously, it takes little to bring the germ of affection for our feathered friends into full flower. The term "friends" is used advisedly, for among the creatures of the open country the birds are the greatest and most unselfish friends of man who could not exist without their beneficial work.

Nothing makes a greater contribution to the cheer of our homes than the little comrades of the air, and we realize how deep is our affection for them when the familiar visitors of last year fail to appear in our gardens. Up North, where the robin is more greatly a bird of sentiment than in the South, the first appearance of this graceful and confiding bird is a symbol, a matter of community rejoicing, the inspiration of song and story and rivalry among the "first robin" reporters.

Here in Tennessee, where we have a great variety of interesting summer visitors, those of us who are stirred by the afflatus of bird love watch eagerly for the appearance of the advance guard from the South. When it arrives in our gardens there is for our benefit a beautiful woodland drama, with its prologue of mating love songs, followed by a succession of acts which include the nest building, feeding, and care of the young and the solicitous watchfulness of the parent birds when their little ones are making their first timid adventure into an unfamiliar world. And when the curtain falls with the good-by chirp of the last visitor, we have had a more charming and satisfying picture than was ever flashed on the screen.

In our solicitude for the comfort of the birds we are cultivating the spirit of mercy, and Solomon said; "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul."

It is not the economic value of the birds of which we wish to speak - that is immeasurable - but rather of their contribution to the peace, contentment and softer side of life. When we are fretted with our daily cares; when, as the psalmist said; "The grasshopper is a burden", we can turn to the birds of the garden and thicket with the assurance that here we will find solace.

Bird lovers, therefore, are kind, gentle and unselfish people. You do not find them in our criminal or police courts, nor within the walls of our jails and penitentiaries, because they are our "very best people" and the birds have helped to make them so.

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The first fall meeting of the Tennessee Ornithological Society will be the last Monday night in September, the 29th, so do not forget the date. The meeting is to be at Peabody College, in the usual place, i.e., the Social-Religious Building. Our new President, Mr. Ganier, who has served in this capacity before, promises an interesting program for the ensuing year. He is capable of keeping this promise.

THE CAMERA IN BIRD WORK

By H. S. Vaughn

The most important requisites in bird photography are time and patience. To undertake this work without ample time to carry out the work you wish to do, would be the merest folly, for it takes weeks and even years to complete one series, or reel as the case may be.

Only the man or woman who has leisure to spare should ever hope to do anything above the ordinary, and yet I would not care to discourage anyone who has the love for this work, for who can tell but that something really worth while may come of even meager efforts. When we consider that it took three seasons for Captain Knight of England to produce his reel of the Golden Eagle, do you wonder that but few real worth while reels have been presented to the public?

One other reel that is worthy of notice is that of the Heron rookery of Louisiana, presented by the Wilson Club to the people of Nashville, a few years ago. Showing the nesting and feeding habits of this most interesting bird, was nothing short of educational to all. What it took in time and effort to produce this reel, no one knows, for it was necessary to build scaffolds in the trees that the operator might get close enough and on a level with the nesting birds in order to get the pictures.

Next, the equipment is quite important, for without the proper equipment this work can not be accomplished. By proper equipment is meant a lens of sufficient speed to be able to get the bird that is flying as if still, though in motion. In order to do this, it requires a lens of f.4.5 speed, nothing slower, for ordinarily birds move with such quickness that the camera shutter must work at a speed of 125 of a second. If birds in flight are wished to be caught by the camera, even a faster lens and speed of shutter are necessary for a successful picture.

The lens on a movie camera that works at a speed of f.1.9 is sufficiently rapid to catch birds in flight provided you are close enough to get the image large enough to be useful for exhibit.

Where still pictures are desired to show the birds full size as the eye sees them, it becomes necessary to use the telescopic lens of nothing less than f.4.5 speed. Such lens are made but are not practical for use on small cameras as their weight prevents their being adaptable to hand cameras.

When a bird or nest is so located that the camera can be placed close to the object desired and can be operated by use of a string, one may hope to produce some very satisfactory bird pictures with the average camera. To be able to conceal the camera so as not to disturb the bird so that it will not return to the nest, is one of the fine arts. Knowing that birds have a regular route of approach to the nest, it becomes necessary to determine this route before the camera can be properly placed. The theory of supposing birds will not return to the nest if the eggs have been handled, is not true, but rather if you disturb the avenue of approach to the nest, the birds are confused and will often desert

their nests.

In summing up what I have to say on the subject of bird photography, I would like to urge that if you have the least proclivity in this direction, that you give vent to it. And if your efforts do not meet with your approval at first, try again, for no one can tell what may come if you pursue the matter far enough. I'll admit it is very discouraging at first when you look over your maiden efforts to note they are not worthy to be passed around, but by repeated effort you should be able to produce worthy specimens. If by learning the art of camera work you may be so placed some day with time, equipment and opportunity for something worth while, you can then put to practice that you know and contribute to science something of which you need not be ashamed.

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THE SPARROW TRAP

Every day something happens in that sparrow trap. Some tragedies, some comedies and a good number of comedy-dramas. Bread wet with water has a potent attraction for birds, especially that morsel used for baiting the trap. Two wrens furnished a cigar-box apartment within twenty feet of the trap and the female decided to interrupt her work long enough to peck at the bait and so lost her liberty.

Because there was fresh cement work so near the trap it could not be reached easily and because the bird did not fuss nor seem bothered she was let alone for a few hours. Shortly the mate found her, fussed at her, scolded her, coaxed her, then in apparent exasperation flew away. Soon he returned with a bit of straw which he pushed and shoved through the wire, then a twig, always talking to her. By noon she had a cunning nest in the darkest corner of the trap, so she was let alone. The male continued thru all the afternoon bringing nesting material, once he added what looked like a worm, which she ate. She scorned the food on the floor of the trap but bathed and drank as tho at liberty. Evidently enjoying the double labor imposed on her tired mate. That night the tiny bundle of feathers was gently put back in the cigar box. Next day about noon a peek in the nest disclosed the first egg.

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Published Quarterly by the Tennessee Ornithological Society. (To record and encourage the study of birds in the State of Tennessee.)

Founded 1915

Dues of One Dollar

Communications should be addressed to the Editor at 1414 Stratton Avenue. Nashville, Tennessee.

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GAME BIRDS OF TENNESSEE

By E. D. McNish

From ear liest times the game birds of Tennessee have been an asset of great value. No state having a greater abundance or variety. Nature, it seems, stocked Tennessee with a lavish hand.

The early settlers were very dependent on this game for their lives, sometimes, before they had a chance to till the land. Game birds then were plentiful, for the Indians only taking such as he required for food made little or no impression on the quantity of wild life. What an array of game birds must have greeted one in those days! Upland game birds in the forests of East Tennessee, ducks and water fowls in West Tennessee lakes and swamps. While Tennessee still has in the aggregate a great many game birds, the amount is insignificant when compared to their former abundance and what with proper protection we would have.

Natural causes and enemies, both winged and four footed no doubt played some part in the decrease in number. But it is to the destructive agencies of men that the terrible decrease in number and extinction of several species has been brought about. Tennessee has almost lost two magnificent game birds. The Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse. Both birds offer a rather easy mark for a sportsman and hunters without regard to the future have all but exterminated these fine birds. They are still found in small numbers in Tennessee and can be saved yet with proper protection.

The Quail and Mourning Dove are more of interest to the majority of hunters on account of their wider distribution. These birds together with a few ducks are about the only game birds left in abundance enough to entice the hunter into the field. The Mourning Dove, so much like the Passenger Pigeon, now extinct, deserves better protection than is now given it. If the law only allowed a half days shooting, say from 11 A. M. to sundown, it would prevent unprincipled sportsmen from killing the limit in the morning in one place and then hunt in another place in the afternoon.

Tennessee has in Reelfoot Lake, one of the greatest of natural resources, where millions of wild ducks feed and rest on their long flights each year to their nesting grounds in the far north. Mallards, Black Ducks, Mergansers, Green and Blue winged Teals, Pintails, Canvas-backs, the Scaups, known to the sportsman as Blackjack, are a few of the waterfowls that are to be found at Reelfoot.

Let us hope that Tennessee will realize in time what a wonderful heritage she has in her game birds and give them the protection they so richly deserve. Remembering as Ruskin wrote: "God has lent us the earth for our life. It is great entail. It belongs as much to those who come after us as to us and we have no right by anything we do or neglect, to involve them in any unnecessary penalties, or to deprive them of the benefit which was in our power to bequeath."

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AUTUMN MIGRATION

By A. F. Ganier

It would be hard to say just when the fall migration really begins. For instance, the Solitary Sandpipers begin to come from the North and appear at our ponds about the middle of July; a bit later the Little Blue Herons, in their immature white plumage, come up from their more southerly breeding grounds and meander our river courses. By the end of the month, Black and White Warblers and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds from the nearby hills and highlands move in to our city and its suburbs. During early August there is a restless moving about of nearly all of our breeding birds and we find them in localities where they are not known to breed. It is supposed that most of these feathered wanderers are immature birds which have not yet become attached to any one locality. By late August we begin to have the forerunners of the great fall warbler migration and we find the Canadian, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Pine, Wilsons Black-cap, and others, which frequent the ragweed patches and thickets.

When September is a week old one is apt to find any of our warblers and then the high tide is on. In woods and in wooded pastures we find mixed groups of these little birds among the trees, moving restlessly on but keeping together the while. The nesting and courting season being over there is no animosity present whatever among the small birds and, black and white, yellow or green, they are like a busy group of children bound for a picnic. In a flock of two dozen birds there are often ten species of warblers, with a sprinkling of Chickadees, Titmice, Field Sparrows, Downy, Red-bellied and other Woodpeckers, etc. The ragweed patches and thickets continue to have their coterie of inhabitants with a somewhat different personnel. In the fields we are briefly entertaining Vesper Sparrows, whose places will be taken a few weeks later by the Savannah Sparrows and Prairie Horned Lark. Our Wood Thrush, Thrasher and Maryland Yellow-throat are now hiding about among the thickets, for moulting goes hard with them and some are wearing wing and tail feathers in no condition for flight. At this time, too, many of our own summer birds slink away to the southward and others, such as the Olive-backed and Grey-cheeked Thrushes, Ovenbirds, etc., come quietly thru, waxing fat on the fall harvest of wild grapes, berries and insect life. Birds at this time of the year become quite fat, in contrast to their lean condition when upon their more hurried northward journey in the Spring.

October comes, with crisp cool days and chilly nights. Many of the leaves are now on the ground and the food has either been stripped or well picked over. The warblers are becoming scarce among the trees but the picking is still good in the ragweeds and here we find the Tennessee, Black-throated Green and a few others of their kin, keeping company with Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Cardinals, Towhees, Downies, Tits and Chickadees. The northern sparrows usually drop in upon us around the 10th of October and almost immediately become common. Most familiar of these are the Song, White-throated, White-crowned,

and Fox. The Juncos come only a little later and this group of finches may well call Tennessee their home for they are with us more than half of each year. The weed patches, thickets and woods are their habitat thru the winter, where they join groups of our more hardy local birds and thus augment our interesting population of bird life throughout the winter.

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The Goldfinch is the last of our native birds to start nesting. They begin building about the last of July and nests with eggs have been found as late as September. It takes from twelve to fourteen days for the eggs to hatch, giving the young very little time to develop stamina before cold weather begins. They are birds with the community spirit of living, nests being usually found in colonies.

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The young of the Little Blue Heron are white and should not be confused with the American Egret, which has been recorded in Tennessee on rare occasions. These herons have the unusual habit of wandering northward after their breeding season.

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October is the month that the Chimney Swifts leave Tennessee for unknown climes to spend the winter. Indians used to think that they buried themselves in the mud to spend the winter.

How many know the Field Sparrow? It is our most common native sparrow.

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At our last Spring meeting there were nine members present with an average service in the T. O. S. of twelve years. These range from fifteen to four.

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One of the greatest menaces to bird-life is the ordinary house cat.

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Encourage the birds about the home. They will be the source of a great amount of pleasure.

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The Tennessee State Museum of Natural History is located at Nashville, in the Memorial Building. A small exhibit in comparison with the gigantic museums over the country but capable of wonderful possibilities. Visit it when in Nashville. It contains the majority of our Tennessee birds.

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Radnor Lake is a source of interest during the winter months because it harbors large flocks of ducks and shore birds.

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Birds have a place in the cycle of human events - protect them.

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